

The University of Chicago

BAR SALIBI ON THE PSALMS

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED
TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

1934

By

WALTER ROBERT ROEHRS

Private Edition, Distributed by
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO LIBRARIES
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

1937

The University of Chicago

BAR SALIBI ON THE PSALMS

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED
TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

1934

By
WALTER ROBERT ROEHRS

Private Edition, Distributed by
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO LIBRARIES
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

1937



BAR SALIBI ON THE PSALMS

I. EXEGESIS

In this investigation the first twenty-three psalms with their accompanying exegesis from the commentary of Dionysius Bar Salibi¹ have been translated and studied especially with reference to the biblical quotations. It was the purpose of this "learned teacher and the star of his age," as Bar Hebraeus calls him, to make a compilation of the explanatory notes on the various books of the Bible from previous writers, having been urged to do so by a "brother." But in his effort to preserve what appeared as valuable to him he often sacrificed order and brevity so that the effect on a modern writer is often exasperating. The compiler professes, indeed, to follow a certain text or a certain group of commentators. Yet he breaks his own rules without any serious compunctions as the tabulations below will show.

The exegesis is given in two separate columns. The first is called the "spiritual and literal interpretation" and is by far the more extensive. As a whole, it belongs to the typical interpretation of the Greek school of Origen and his successors. In giving this exegesis, Bar Salibi is not content to explain a psalm once by quoting sections from it and adding explanatory

¹For a biography of Bar Salibi and information on the MS on which this work is based, cf. previous dissertations on the commentary of Bar Salibi, such as Thorkild Peter Rudolph Jacobsen, "The Commentary of Dionysius Bar Salibi on the Book of Job," University of Chicago, 1929; Daniel Henry Schulze, "A Commentary of Dionysius Bar Salibi on the Historical Books of the Old Testament," University of Chicago, 1930, pp. 1 ff; as well as the standard works on Syriac literature, such as, A Baumstark, Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur, pp. 295 ff., and R. Duval, Anciennes Litteratures Chretiennes, II, pp. 399 ff.

notes, but he often works over the same psalm twice and, in some cases, three times. In addition, in each of these treatises on a certain psalm, he does not rest when he has given one possible meaning to the verse under consideration, but will quote various views, each different from the other.

The second is entitled the "literal" interpretation. It usually finds a situation in the life of David, Hezekiah, or some other Old Testament worthy to whom the words and import of the psalm are applied, usually based on the superscription of the psalms found in the Lee and Urmiah editions of the Peshitta. Each psalm is explained but once, and in a very direct and concise manner. The only psalm which makes an exception in the first twenty-three is the sixth. It has received no interpretation in this column nor is a reason offered for its omission. Its absence may be due entirely to an oversight on the part of the author.

II. SOURCES

The following table gives the sources and the general plan of the "spiritual" interpretation for the first twenty-one psalms:

- | | |
|----------|--|
| Psalm 1. | Explained once; no source given. |
| Psalm 2. | Explained twice; no source given. Second explanation merely introduced with: "start from the beginning." |
| Psalm 3. | Explained twice; no source given. |
| Psalm 4. | Explained once; no source given. |
| Psalm 5. | Explained once; no source given. |
| Psalm 6. | Explained once; no source given. |
| Psalm 7. | First explanation is very brief; no source given.
Second is according to Andreas.
Psalms 3,4,5,6 are explained after Psalm 7; no source given; very likely according to Andreas. |

- Psalm 7. Explained for the third time; according to Zēura.
- Psalm 8. First explanation according to Andreas; second according to LXX.
- Psalm 9. First explanation has no source given; second is from Andreas.
- Psalm 10. First explanation is according to the LXX; the second, according to Peshitta. ("In this interpretation like the Greeks we have treated it (the psalm) as one, but like the Syrians we will interpret it separately below.")
- Psalm 11. First explanation is according to the Peshitta; the second according to the LXX.
- Psalm 12. First, according to the Peshitta; second, according to the LXX.
- Psalm 13. First, no source given; second, according to the LXX, although not expressly stated.
- Psalm 14. First, no source given; second, according to the LXX.
- Psalm 15. One explanation only; according to the LXX.
- Psalm 17. First, no source given; second, according to the LXX.
- Psalm 18. First, according to the LXX; second, according to the Peshitta.
- Psalm 19. First, no source given; second, according to the LXX.
- Psalm 20. First, no source given; second, according to the LXX.
- Psalm 21. First, according to Daniel, Zēura, Athanasius; second, merely given as "differently"; third, according to the LXX.

From this table it is clear that the general plan, although not carried out in several instances, seems to have been to work over every psalm twice, the second interpretation being

"according to the LXX." Eight psalms deviate from this rule: five receive but one interpretation (Psalms 1,4,5,6,15) whereas three are subjected to three explanations (Psalms 3,7,21).

The fathers mentioned as sources can be indentified with the exception of Zéurah. Andreas is characterized by Bar Salibi on Folio 117a as a "presbyter and a Jerusalemite." He is without doubt Andreas of Crete who is also commonly called Andreas of Jerusalem¹ because he began his career in a monastery in Jerusalem at the age of fifteen years. The date of his birth is somewhere in the middle of the seventh century. He died July 4, 740 (or 720). The Daniel mentioned is certainly Daniel of Salah² who, according to his own statement wrote his large commentary on the Psalms in 541/2. Athanasius is the well-known church father whose dates are 293-373 A.D.

III. COLLATION OF BIBLICAL QUOTATIONS

1. In general

The collation of the biblical quotations cited in Bar Salibi's commentary on the Psalms, shows first of all the negligible amount of text criticism found here over against the extensive material offered by Bar Hebraeus in his commentary. It is only occasionally that the former will insert such remarks: "the Greek says" or "the Hebrew says." In the second place, while Bar Salibi cites the Peshitta in the majority of cases, as Bar Hebraeus does almost throughout, he also uses many citations from the Syro-Hexaplar, however, without any consistency in his choice between

¹For a biography of Andreas cf. The Catholic Encyclopedia, vol.3, p. 452; for his method cf. Bar Salibi, Folio 117a, 15 ff.

²Cf. A. Baumstark, Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur, p. 179; R. Duval, Anciennes Litteratures Chretiennes, II, p. 78.

the two versions. He may profess to quote from the Syro-Hexaplar, yet we find the Peshitta text in many instances where the latter differs from the former. In other cases nothing may be said of the version that is quoted and we will find Peshitta text in one verse and that of the Syro-Hexaplar in the next. Often the text cited differs from both versions or shows clear conflation of the two.

2. Collation.

The following compilation will give a survey of the manner in which the biblical quotations are handled in the first twenty-one psalms. The passages are divided into three large groups with several sub-divisions under each. Under each division the agreement or disagreement with the versions and texts¹ are listed. The numbers in each section indicate number of citations. The collation follows:

A. Quotations expressly taken from the Peshitta.

- | | |
|--|----|
| 1. that agree with ALMU and with Hex. | 11 |
| 2. that agree with ALMU but not with Hex. | 30 |
| 3. that agree with one or more of ALMU but not with Hex. | 4 |
| 4. that agree neither with ALMU nor with Hex. | 10 |

B. Quotations that are taken expressly from the LXX.

- | | |
|---|----|
| 1. that agree with Hex. and ALMU. | 29 |
| 2. that agree with Hex. but not with any of ALMU. | 37 |
| 3. that have the text of ALMU and of Hex. side by side. | 2 |
| 4. that do not agree with Hex. nor any ALMU. | 57 |
| 5. that do not agree with Hex. but with all of ALMU. | 51 |

¹The following abbreviations are used: A, Ambrosian text; L, the Lee text; M, the Mousul text; U, the Urmiah text; Hex., the Syro-Hexaplaric version.

6. that do not agree with Hex. but with one or more of ALMU. 2
7. that do not agree with Hex. but in the explanation of which terms are used from the Hex. 13
8. that agree with the Hex. but in the interpretation of which terms are used from ALMU. 1
9. that do not agree with the Hex. nor with ALMU but in the interpretation of which terms are used from the Hex. or from ALMU. 3

C. Quotations of whose source nothing is said.

1. that agree with ALMU and with the Hex. 149
2. that agree with ALMU but not with the Hex. 310
3. that agree with one or more of ALMU and with the Hex. 2
4. that agree with one or more of ALMU but not with the Hex. 24
5. that agree neither with ALMU nor with Hex. 77
6. that agree with Hex. but not with any of ALMU. 23
7. that agree with ALMU but in the explanation of which terms are used from the Hex. 27
8. that agree neither with the Hex. nor with ALMU, but in the interpretation of which terms are used that agree with ALMU or the Hex. or with both. 5

This collation bears out, above all, the statement made above that Bar Salibi quoted the Peshitta in the majority of cases. Of the total of 936 quotations occurring in the explanation of the first twenty-one psalms, 664 agree with all or part of ALMU. In this figure, however, are included 191 instances in which the citations agreed with the Peshitta and the Hex. as

well. Of special interest is the fact that among those quotations that are expressly taken from the LXX (II in the collation), there are 37 cases which agree with the Hex., while there are 53 instances which do not agree with the Hex. but with ALMU. Of still greater importance are those 57 quotations that are supposed to agree with the Hex. but which have neither the Hex. nor the Peshitta text.

IV. FINAL RESULTS

Two interesting facts for the study of the Syriac versions, carried on by the Peshitta project of the University of Chicago, result from the study of Bar Salibi's quotations in the first twenty-one psalms. In the first place, it is clear that other Syriac versions from the Greek besides the Hex. were in vogue. Whether he himself translated directly from the LXX, whether a translation was prepared by others at this time, or whether he found these quotations in his sources, is hard to say. At any rate, he did not hesitate to use quotations that did not agree with the Hex. nor with the Pesh. This, in turn, would indicate that the Hex. did not have the position of supreme authority as a version from the Greek and that the writer felt no compunctions about citing a text different from the Pesh.

The second fact is closely linked up with the first. The apparent ease with which terms from the Hex. and the Pesh. are interchanged and the frequent conflations of the two versions point to the fact that the Pesh. text was exposed to the influence of the Hex. and that the Hex., on the other hand, did not escape the influence of the Pesh. Conflations with Greek versions other than the Hex. could, therefore, also be expected to appear.

